

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

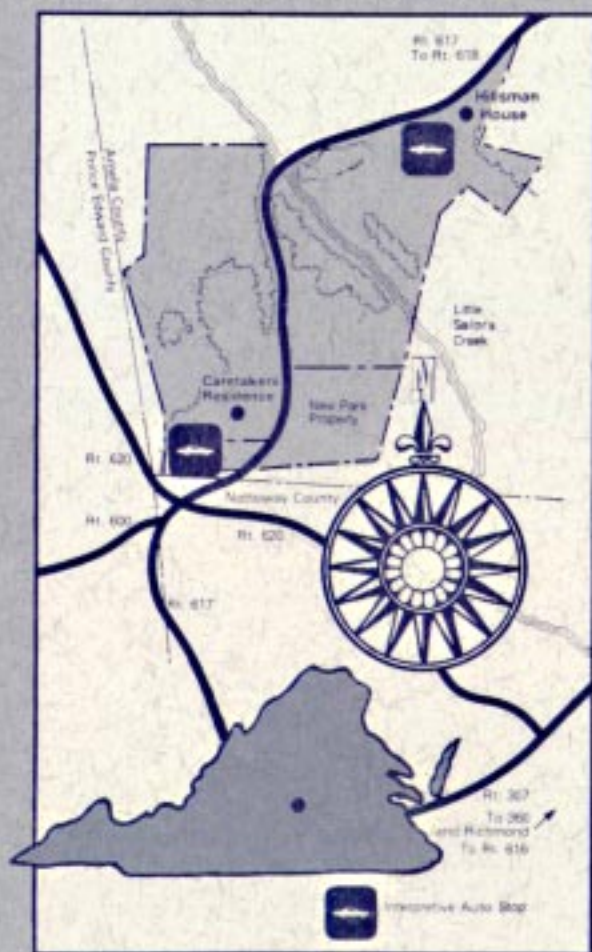
Twin Lakes State Park
Route 2, Box 70
Green Bay, VA 23942
(434) 392-3435

or

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation
203 Governor St., Suite 306
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 786-1712
www.dcr.state.va.us



Department of Conservation & Recreation
CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES



THE HILLSMAN HOUSE

Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park was the scene of the last major battle of the Civil War in Virginia. Here on April 6, 1865, General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, lost more than 7,700 men plus valuable supplies. The battle also left scars on the Hillsman House.

A compact and relatively simple structure, the house is rich in craftsmanship and history. It is said to have been built in the 1770s by Moses Overton. His relatives and descendants, who included James Moses Hillsman, lived in or near the house until it was designated a battlefield park in 1934. Hillsman's family was living in the residence at the outbreak of the battle.

The story-and-a-half structure contains dormer windows and is constructed throughout with hand-hewn timbers, wooden pegs, anvil-wrought nails and a variety of ironwork. Other interesting features include brick nogging daubed in clay and beaded weather boarding.

Although the Hillsman House is a magnificent handmade colonial structure, the three battles of Sailor's Creek gave the house prominence. For here, overlooking the battlefield, the house served as a Federal field hospital where wounded soldiers of both north and south were treated. In fact, bloodstains remain on the floor, evidence of the fierceness of the battles.

SAILOR'S CREEK

72

HOURS

BEFORE

THE

END



APRIL 3-5, 1865

EVENTS LEADING TO THE BATTLE: As General Lee withdrew his Army of Northern Virginia from the trenches protecting Petersburg and Richmond, he divided his troops in three main columns, which were soon joined by a smaller contingent escaping from the Five Forks Battlefields. His plan was to regroup these forces at Amelia Court House, resupply his army and travel to North Carolina, where he could join forces with Confederate General Johnston's Army of Tennessee.

Because of rain-soaked and swollen streams, travel was difficult, and the majority of the wagon trains from Richmond were caught and destroyed by the Union Army. When Lee's troops finally arrived at the courthouse, the supplies scheduled to meet the converging troops never appeared, forcing Lee to waste a day while his men foraged for food through the countryside. This delay and inability to find food gave General Sheridan's Union cavalry enough time to entrench themselves seven miles below Amelia, along the railroad at Jetersville, blocking Lee's route south.

Finding his direct route to North Carolina blocked, Lee ordered his columns to detour around the Union Army and push westward along the South Side Railroad to Farmville, where supply trains from Lynchburg awaited.

APRIL 6, 1865

THE BATTLES OF SAILOR'S CREEK: The next day, still bearing in a westerly direction while pressed by Union cavalry and the infantry of the Sixth and Second Corps, Lee rearranged his marching order to gain greater mobility and protection of the wagons. This new order consisted of Generals Longstreet, Anderson and Ewell, the supply wagons and Gen. Gordon as the rearguard. Lee rode with Longstreet's command.

Within a short time, several columns found it difficult to keep up with the marching pace and quickly became engulfed in the mire of the bottom lands at Little Sailor's Creek. Unaware that their lines were split, Lee and Longstreet marched onto Rice, Va. But with Confederate lines strung out along roads ankle-deep in mud, the Union cavalry struck at the wagons, forcing Anderson's men to stop and fight. In a desperate attempt to save the supplies, Ewell detoured the wagon train down Jamestown Road to cross Sailor's Creek further downstream. Anderson and Ewell went forward while Gordon followed the wagons west.

Anderson soon found his advance blocked by federal cavalry at Marshall's Crossroads. His initial attack on the Union cavalry was successful, but eventually his line was overrun, causing him to surrender.

Ewell, while crossing Sailor's Creek, saw blue infantry, supported by artillery, forming in lines at the Hillsman House to his rear. Under General Wright, the Union troops moved across the waist-deep creek and began their assault on Ewell's line. Confederate infantry, artillerymen, sailors, clerks and marines mounted a countercharge that forced the Union line back across the creek. But when Union artillery fired canister at the Confederate troops, Wright's forces were able to counter attack, enveloping Ewell's troops and forcing them to surrender.

Meanwhile, General Gordon's troops and the detoured wagon train became bogged down at the "double bridges" crossing over the confluence of Big and Little Sailor's Creek. Union troops under General Humphrys attacked Gordon's forces in a sharp, bloody encounter. By nightfall, the battle had ended, with 300 wagons and 1,700 men captured. As Confederates fled these three bloody battles toward Rice's Station across Big Sailor's Creek, General Lee remarked, "My God! Has the army been dissolved?"

By dusk, the battles of Sailor's Creek were over. Lee had lost more than 7,700 men and eight generals, the largest number of men to ever surrender in a single action on this continent. With such a drastic reduction in troops and supplies, Lee's situation was critical. Seventy-two hours later, Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

